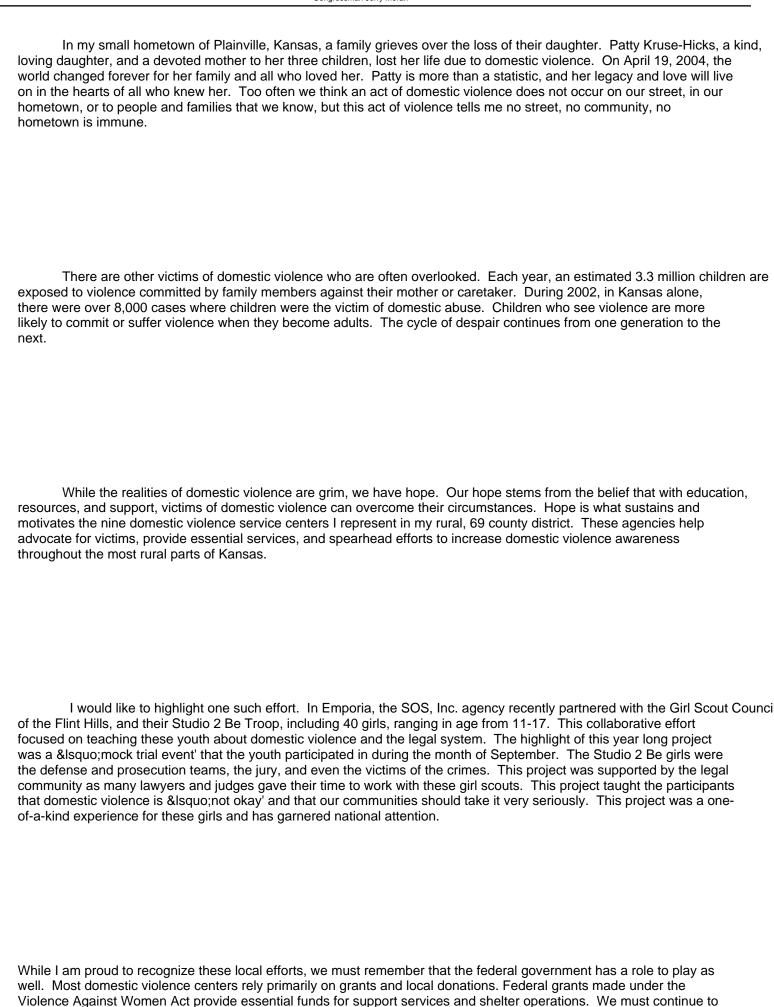# October 2005 - Recognizing Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Recognizing Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Given on the Floor of the U.S. House of Representatives

 by Congressman Jerry Moran

October 17, 2005

Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize October as National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Thankfully, we have made progress in raising awareness and attention of domestic violence and providing assistance to the affected victims. However, it is a problem that has not gone away.

We must not forget about these crimes that disrupt homes and destroys families. It is estimated that over 2 million acts of domestic violence take place each year here in the United States. According to a recent study in my home state of Kansas, one domestic violence act occurs every 24 minutes.

Domestic violence is an issue that affects all aspects of our society and is not bound by race, economics, or age. It can be blamed for increased medical care costs, decreased productivity, and increased absences at work. Domestic violence also promotes a culture of depression, hopelessness, and fear. One incidence of domestic violence can create a cycle of despair that is difficult for not only the victim, but also entire families to overcome.

In my small hometown of Plainville, Kansas, a family grieves over the loss of their daughter. Patty Kruse-Hicks, a kind, loving daughter, and a devoted mother to her three children, lost her life due to domestic violence. On April 19, 2004, the world changed forever for her family and all who loved her. Patty is more than a statistic, and her legacy and love will live on in the hearts of all who knew her. Too often we think an act of domestic violence does not occur on our street, in our hometown, or to people and families that we know, but this act of violence tells me no street, no community, no hometown is immune.

There are other victims of domestic violence who are often overlooked. Each year, an estimated 3.3 million children are exposed to violence committed by family members against their mother or caretaker. During 2002, in Kansas alone, there were over 8,000 cases where children were the victim of domestic abuse. Children who see violence are more likely to commit or suffer violence when they become adults. The cycle of despair continues from one generation to the next.

While the realities of domestic violence are grim, we have hope. Our hope stems from the belief that with education, resources, and support, victims of domestic violence can overcome their circumstances. Hope is what sustains and motivates the nine domestic violence service centers I represent in my rural, 69 county district. These agencies help advocate for victims, provide essential services, and spearhead efforts to increase domestic violence awareness throughout the most rural parts of Kansas.

I would like to highlight one such effort. In Emporia, the SOS, Inc. agency recently partnered with the Girl Scout Council of the Flint Hills, and their Studio 2 Be Troop, including 40 girls, ranging in age from 11-17. This collaborative effort focused on teaching these youth about domestic violence and the legal system. The highlight of this year long project was a ‘mock trial event' that the youth participated in during the month of September. The Studio 2 Be girls were the defense and prosecution teams, the jury, and even the victims of the crimes. This project was supported by the legal community as many lawyers and judges gave their time to work with these girl scouts. This project taught the participants that domestic violence is ‘not okay' and that our communities should take it very seriously. This project was a one-of-a-kind experience for these girls and has garnered national attention.

While I am proud to recognize these local efforts, we must remember that the federal government has a role to play as well. Most domestic violence centers rely primarily on grants and local donations. Federal grants made under the Violence Against Women Act provide essential funds for support services and shelter operations. We must continue to ensure that our shelters and crisis centers receive adequate funding.

We recognize October as National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, but we need to recognize the consequences of domestic violence all year long. I commend those who work every day to help victims of domestic violence, especially those who work in the nine service areas of my district, Dodge City, Emporia, Garden City, Great Bend, Hays, Hutchinson, Liberal, Salina, and Ulysses. Through education, funding, and support, we can continue working together to break the cycle of domestic violence and bring hope to victims affected by these terrible acts.